

VZCZCXRO3874
PP RUEHROV
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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 071511Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4450
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0061

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 002161

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [UN](#) [UG](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: LRA Talks Resume as LRA Assembles

Ref: Khartoum 2038

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Talks between Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) resumed in Juba on September 6, amidst increasing reports of LRA fighters moving to their assembly points. Talks are now focusing on the social issues in northern Uganda. Most observers are optimistic about the talks, but are now discussing whether the negotiations can successfully address the fundamental social issues in Uganda. Meanwhile, Switzerland is searching for a way to continue its support without undermining the authority of the International Criminal Court (ICC). END SUMMARY.

Machar Returns as the Process Gains Momentum

¶2. (U) After an initial recess to allow the cessation of hostilities (CoH) to take effect, talks have been on hold since Sunday because the lead mediator, Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar had traveled to one of the assembly points, Owiny-ki-Bul. He wanted to ensure the designated area was not mined, and to boost support from the local population. Owiny-ki-Bul is 10 km from the Ugandan border, just outside of Parajok and east of Nimule. The second assembly point, Ri-Kwangba, is on the Congo border south of Maridi, next to Nbanga and near the LRA's Garamba park base.

¶3. (U) Over the past week, there have been increasing reports of LRA fighters emerging from the bush and proceeding to the assembly points, despite early complaints from LRA leader Joseph Kony about designated routes, and accusations of minor CoH violations on both sides. Surprise encounters between Ugandan military (UPDF) and the LRA have all ended peacefully, and one of the ICC indictees, Dominic Ongwen, has reportedly received food and safe passage from the UPDF.

¶4. (SBU) This initial success has led to a wave of exuberance in Southern Sudan; any mention of the peace process at the opening of Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (septel) met with cheers and loud applause. The discussions are now shifting from whether these talks can succeed to whether there is room in a deal with Kony to solve Uganda's underlying social issues. A team of observers, led by Gulu District Chairman Norbert Mao, is trying to help steer the process in that direction. Chairman Mao told the Acting Consul General that he wants to ensure Kony is northern Uganda's last rebel.

Switzerland Trying to Support Peace and ICC

¶5. (SBU) Swiss ambassador for humanitarian affairs, Jean-Daniel Bieler, also wants these talks to lead to a lasting and just peace. In Juba to consult with the Swiss humanitarian advisor to the talks, Ambassador Bieler believes the process may eventually marginalize Kony, placating the LRA leader while focusing on the root causes of Ugandan's social problems. While he thinks this development should

be encouraged, he expressed fears that Kony may end the talks if he sees it moving in that direction.

¶6. (SBU) Bieler is also concerned that the negotiators are not really working to resolve the ICC issue. If a deal is reached, he does not want it to be scuttled by The Hague Court. That, Bieler said, is the paradox of the Swiss position: they want to support the talks without undermining the authority or legitimacy of the nascent ICC. The Swiss Ambassador does not believe there will be an acceptable legal solution to this conundrum, so he would like the international community to find a political one. While difficult, Bieler thinks this is essential for the continued viability of the ICC. He requested U.S. support in finding this solution.

HUME